

The Coastal Ecosystems Program

Opportunism in Partnerships Southern New England – New York Bight

Partnerships are a critical component of the Southern New England - New York Bight Coastal Ecosystems Program. With its high concentration of urban areas, this area is home to a vast array of stakeholders and a multitude of overlapping interests. There is, necessarily, great benefit in tapping into the abilities and expertise of all the various players. Projects can be completed more efficiently and effectively when partners contribute their own special resources, and the SNEP's skill in identifying and pursuing such opportunities has been the backbone of many recent successes.

The Fish Passage Challenge

During the last century, thousands of dams and other barriers were built throughout the region's watersheds. Though beneficial in a number of ways, these structures are also detrimental; they injure fish populations by impeding migration and decreasing spawning habitat. This loss of spawning area is a primary cause for the dramatic decline of many anadromous* species.

A Partnership to the Rescue - Part I Long Island, New York

For the first season since colonial times, alewife runs were open on Long Island in the year 2000. Thanks to the island's first fish ladder, more than 1.5 river miles and 63 pond acres were accessible to the anadromous species. The project was the result of a unique partnership developed by the SNEP – funds, design services and construction expertise for the fishway were provided by a variety of partners.

Partners: SNEP, NY Department of Environmental Conservation, Suffolk County Cornell Cooperative Extension, Riverhead Building Supply, Peconic Paddler, Knapp/Swezey Foundation, Bank of New York, North Fork Captain's Association, Miller Environmental and Private individuals.

A Partnership to the Rescue - Part II New Haven, Conn.

With eyes and ears open to collaborations, the SNEP recognized a partnership opportunity in restoring alewife and blueback herring populations in Connecticut's West River. A \$51,000 fishway was installed in 2001, and the reestablished habitat is expected to make a significant contribution to Long Island Sound populations by supporting more than 200,000 spawning adults each year



Don Henne/USFWS

On the West River in Connecticut, 3 river miles and 14 pond acres were reopened at Pond Lily. SNEP identified and pursued this successful partnership opportunity.

Partners: SNEP, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, New Haven Land Trust, West River Watershed Association and Connecticut Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership.



Tom Halavik/USFWS

SNEP helped develop a partnership to plan and install this 890-pound, \$12,000 structure at Grangebél Dam on the Peconic River, New York.

**Anadromous fish begin their lives in fresh water and then swim to salt water; returning to spawn in fresh water.*



Tom Halavik/USFWS

SNEP contributed funding, expertise and two new sections of Alaskan steep pass as partners in the Ed Bill's Pond fishway project.

A Partnership to the Rescue - Part III Lyme, Conn.

When the fishway at Ed Bill's Pond was opened for use, 4 miles of stream became available for anadromous fish such as alewife, blueback herring, Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey and sea-run brown trout. SNEP once again helped pull a variety of partners together to install the fish passage and restore the habitat.

Partners: SNEP, Connecticut River Watershed Council, The Service's Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Town of Lyme, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Connecticut Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership and Individual contributors.



Lori Benoit/USFWS

In 2000, partners removed 50 tons of the invasive water chestnut from the Hockanum River in Connecticut. By 2001, that number had dropped to a mere 4.5 tons.

The Invasive Species Challenge

Plants and animals are introduced into new environments in a variety of ways: seeds are transported by birds; larvae are brought into harbors when ships exchange their ballast water. Most often these species perish, yet sometimes they survive and thrive. When this happens the natural ecosystems are disrupted. Native species can be outcompeted, losing their space and their food source as the newcomer invades their home. These so-called invasive species are posing an ever-greater threat to marine and terrestrial systems around the country.

A Partnership to the Rescue - Part IV East Hartford, Conn.

In the summer of 2000, a daunting threat expanded within the Connecticut River watershed in the form of the water chestnut. As part of a team effort to remove the invasive weed before it spread throughout the region, SNEP provided funding for a gravel ramp to give river access to the project's mechanical harvester and dump trucks. When teams returned in 2001 for another round of harvesting, they pulled up less than 10 percent of what they had the year before – an indication that their efforts had met with success.

Partners: SNEP, The Service's Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge and Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut River Watershed Council, Hockanum River Watershed Association, Cellu-Tissue Corp., United Technologies Corp. and Connecticut Sea Grant.

The Benefits of Partnership

Each of these projects contributed not only to fishery and habitat restoration, but they also encouraged broad stakeholder involvement. Such partnerships often make for long-term buy-in, and they set the groundwork for future cooperation. SNEP is committed to working with current partners, and will continue to seek new collaborations in the future.

For further information, please contact:

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May 2002

